

Summary of the Board of Education Meeting

Tuesday, June 20, 2006

ACTION ITEMS

- Approved a consent agenda including bids and contracts, a school bus contract transfer, donations, and minutes of Board of Education meetings.
- Approved administrative promotions and appointments (see: "Board approves administrative promotions, appointments").
- Ratified and signed an addendum to the contract with the Howard County Administrators Association to include Athletics and Activities Managers.
- Approved the tentative quarterly agenda for July-September 2006.
- Approved Policy 2331, Field Trips and Student Activity Trips; and Policy 2332, Foreign Travel.
- Approved Policy 2050, Attendance.

System shows gains on state assessments; all ethnic/racial groups meet local standard in reading

Superintendent Sydney Cousin introduced a report on the HCPSS 2006 Maryland School Assessments (MSA) results by saying the school system has a lot to celebrate this year, across schools and across students groups. He reported that overall, 88 percent of HCPSS students reached proficiency in reading and 84 percent in mathematics. Dr. Cousin also noted that Howard County African American and Hispanic students have met the local standard of 70 percent, scoring at or above proficient in reading across grade levels.

This year, African American and Hispanic students at the elementary level have also met the local standard in mathematics. Dr. Cousin said that across grade levels, African American students have posted an increase of 13 percentage points in math over the last three years -- moving from 51 percent at proficient or above to 64 percent.

Deputy Superintendent Sandra Erickson presented additional highlights of the system's MSA performance. She reported that:

- All elementary schools met the county standard of 70 percent proficient or above in BOTH reading and mathematics.
- All middle schools met the county standard in reading. In mathematics, 13 middle schools met the county standard.
- Trend data in reading shows that across grade levels all ethnic groups have made progress since 2004, and all racial/ethnic groups have met the county standard.
- Trend data in math shows that across grade levels all ethnic groups have made progress since 2004. Most notably, students receiving FARMS services have gained 13 percentage points and special education students have improved performance by 11 percentage points.
- At the elementary level, 33 schools have reached 80 percent proficiency or above in reading and 30 schools have reached 80 percent or above in mathematics. At the middle level, 14 schools have reached 80 percent proficiency or above in reading and 11 schools have reached 80 percent or above in math.

- Seven elementary schools have 95 percent at proficient or above in reading and seven elementary schools have 95 percent or above in math. Burleigh Manor Middle School reached 95 percent in reading.

Mrs. Erickson said the system still has work to do to ensure that English language learners and students receiving special education services meet local standards. A more detailed MSA report will be presented to the Board on July 13.

Board approves administrative promotions, appointments

The Board approved the following administrative appointments and promotions, effective July 1, 2006:

Middle	From:	To:
Melissa Shindel	Assistant Principal Prince George's Co.	Assistant Principal Patuxent Valley MS
Robert Motley	Assistant Principal Centennial HS	Principal Patuxent Valley MS
Jennifer Peduzzi	Office of Special Ed.	Principal Patapsco MS
High	From:	To:
Martin Vandenberg	Assistant Principal Baltimore Co.	Assistant Principal Hammond HS
Kevin Dorsey	Teacher Marriotts Ridge HS	Assistant Principal Centennial HS
Cara Moulds	Teacher Centennial HS	Assistant Principal Marriotts Ridge HS
Elaine Reid	Teacher Long Reach HS	Assistant Principal Oakland Mills HS
Nick Novak	Teacher River Hill HS	Assistant Principal River Hill HS
Chris Fritz	Teacher Atholton HS	Assistant Principal Atholton HS

In addition, Deputy Superintendent Sandra Erickson announced the transfer of Assistant Principal Joseph Dymek from Patuxent Valley Middle School to Hammond High School, effective July 1, 2006.

Bridge to Excellence: Family and Community Involvement

Diane Martin, Director of Student, Family and Community Services, introduced a *Bridge to Excellence Report* on involving and engaging families and the community in student achievement. She noted that education is a shared responsibility and depends on strong connections between the home, the school and the community.

The school system's approach is based on Joyce Epstein's six types of involvement:

- Parenting
- Communicating
- Volunteering
- Learning at Home
- Decision-making
- Collaborating with the Community

Martin introduced staff members and community members who reported the success of various outreach efforts. Martin concluded by stating her department's commitment to strengthening parent and community partnerships.

Board receives report of Anti-bullying Task Force

Assistant Superintendents Robert Glascock and Linda Wise presented the findings and recommendations of the HCPSS Anti-bullying Task Force, convened by the Superintendent to study the issue of bullying in schools and develop ways to address it. The committee recommends that HCPSS:

- Adopt the definition of bullying from the Safe Schools Reporting Act.
- Address anti-bullying standards and recommendations in the revision of Policy 3431, Discipline; Policy 3441, Student's Responsibilities and Rights; and the Student Code of Conduct.
- Revise Policy 3445, Violence and School Safety, for 2006-07.
- Address anti-bullying standards and recommendations when developing the Civility Policy.
- Identify components of a safe and orderly environment, and include specific anti-bullying strategies in School Improvement Plans.
- Integrate anti-bullying content and skills across all curriculum program areas.
- Provide ongoing professional development that enables staff to increase their knowledge and skills to address anti-bullying measures in our schools.
- Engage parents, families, and community organizations in the development, support and enhancement of Goal 2 initiatives.
- Collect and review data on bullying to monitor the incidents of bullying and improvement efforts at the school and system level.

Next steps include plans to involve students in developing anti-bullying campaigns and to use data from the School Climate Survey to identify concerns and plan strategies. Progress will be reported as part of the Bridge to Excellence (BTE) update on Goal 2.

System responds to new health requirements

Director of Student Services Pam Blackwell reported the system's response to five major health-related topics. She reported on steps taken by local schools to check student immunization records and contact parents about the new immunization requirements for students in prekindergarten through ninth grade, which go into effect September 1, 2006.

She reported on the CPR/First Aid Grant Project, which provides for school staff to be certified in first aid and CPR. In addition, legislation effective July 1 requires local Boards of Education to develop and implement an Automated External Defibrillator Program for each high school. Planning is underway to implement both these initiatives according to Blackwell.

Blackwell also indicated that the HCPSS and the Howard County Health Department are investigating the feasibility of offering school-based flu mist vaccination clinics for elementary school students and that committees have been formed to plan the school system's response and recovery efforts should the threat of a pandemic flu materialize.

Board postpones decision on religious observances

The Board postponed a decision on changes to Policy 13111, Religious Observances, for at least six to ten months to allow staff to collect additional data on the number of students requesting accommodations and the impact of those accommodations on classroom instruction and teacher workload.

During a second work session on the proposed policy, the Board questioned staff about the information that was collected by the policy committee and expressed an interest in data that are not currently available.

Deputy Superintendent Sandra Erickson responded that, because of the significance of this policy, staff would be willing to gather data during the next school year to inform the Board's decision. The Superintendent and Mrs. Erickson develop a proposed timeline for future approval. On a related item, the Board agreed to take action on Policy 2911, Religion and Religious Materials, at the July 13 Board meeting.

In other action...

At Public Forum, teacher Colleen Morris testified regarding the impact of students missing class time, including the increased workload on teachers. Damani Ingram asked that the Board encourage religious tolerance and support release time for students to practice religion and for other activities. Parent Linda Turner indicated that she has contacted the central office numerous times but has not gotten a response related to concerns about her daughter.

Also at Public Forum, Ann DeLacy, President of the Howard County Education Association, shared questions from HCEA members related to the impact of a change to the religious observance policy on teacher workload. Cradlerock School students Cara Cassell and Alisa Metzger presented information on a research project they conducted with four other students related to a historical structure on their school's campus.

The Board received a report on a school system initiative to present a consistent visual image that is representative of the system's high quality. A new "signature" will be phased in that incorporates a stylized flame of knowledge with a distinctive typeface.

The Board scheduled meetings with community groups and rescheduled a work session on Board committees.

Ellen Giles, chairman of the Citizen's Advisory Committee, provided an annual report on the 2005-06 activities of the committee.

The next regular meeting of the Board of Education is scheduled for 4 p.m. on Thursday, July 13, 2006.